

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

MARGARET HORTON

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JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Margaret Horton

INTERVIEWERS: Sue Morse, Ann Krakar, Steve Pope

Pope: This is an interview with Mrs. Margaret Horton for the Joliet Junior College Oral History Program by Sue Morse, Ann Krakar, and Steve Pope at 708 Commercial Street, Plainfield, Illinois, on October 16, 1972, at seven o'clock P.M.

Krakar: Margaret, could you tell us something about your early childhood; where and when you were born, and what it was like?

Horton: Well, would you rather start farther back where my father was born? He was one of the family of twelve children and he was next to the youngest, born in Scotland, came to lower Canada, that is down along the St. Lawrence River, when he was only two years old. (Refer to obituary on page 33). When he grew up to be a young man, he came up to the United States. He had two brothers here before him. He met up with a group, Zumwalt was the leader, and he went to California to dig gold.¹ They went with oxen and covered wagons and some would sleep under the wagon while the others would watch the Indians away. I now am wearing a ring made from a gold nugget that he got in California. He sold out and went across the isthmus of Panama and went up to eastern Canada where he was married at Alexander Bay, New York, across from Canada. They came down the St. Lawrence River and

¹A family by the name of Zumwalt left Joliet for California to seek their fortune. Those traveling with Zumwalts paid a fee in addition to duties to be performed on the journey. In return they received meals and protection.

brought a team of horses with them, came to Chicago, bought a wagon there and came out and he stopped at his brother's until he found a place for them to live. The trip back took 21 days.

Krakar: Where was that?

Horton: In Seward.

Morse: Seward Township?

Horton: Seward Township. That is Kendall County. The County Line (Road), do you know where it is?, is the first road this way from that gas station that we spoke of the other night. (Refer to map on page³⁴).

Now, the Ridge Road is the next road there and that is where my son lives. It was about two miles from that corner that my father stopped.

They found a farm for sale, moved there and started farming and there is where he stayed the rest of his life. We were all born on that farm. He later bought the McKeown farm, as the sons didn't care to farm. They became lawyers. There were eight children in our family.

I was born April 12, 1880. There was a lot of sickness among children at that time: dysentery and other diseases caused from the open wells.

There were only four of us that grew up as adults. We went to the country school. At that time, there were fifty pupils that went.

Krakar: What was the name of the school?

Horton: The John Bronk School. Peter Bronk school was east near Caton Farm. The teachers were paid around twenty; if you got twenty-five dollars that was big pay. They did the janitor work

and had to build a fire in the morning no matter how cold it was, and did the sweeping. The children, though, would carry the water from a neighboring place across the road. With a long handled dipper we all drank from the same dipper. There were not many deaths caused from it either [laughter]! But, today they can't do that. Father bought cattle, this was later on. We would herd the cows on the road.

There was a spring about twenty rods from the house. It was a barrel and a half deep, but you couldn't dip it dry. When we put the cows in the pasture, we had another half barrel that we put the water in. We would dip that out of the well. Sometimes there were frogs down in there, but it was real good water. We had dug wells those days. Snakes were plentiful. Mother raised turkeys and chickens to help out with the expense. And sometimes, when she had the turkey sets, she would go out there and find a big spotted snake coiled up over the eggs. It was not easy to get that snake out of there and get rid of it without breaking the eggs. She somehow knew how.

Krakar: How did you get to school?

Horton: Oh, we walked to school. It was three miles to the school. It was the Bronk School on what is now known as the Caton Farm Road.

Krakar: How far out from Joliet is it?

Horton: That would be about ten miles from Joliet, going west. West and a little north.

Krakar: What is it used for now?

Horton: That building now is used for a farm house. The same floor

is being used as was used in the floor when it was built. That was a good many years ago.

Krakar: How far in school did you go?

Horton: I went through the eight grades. That was all the teacher was compelled to teach. But, I took high school work, too, because I wanted to go to school. I could have taught, but, teachers were ridiculed a good deal. My parents did not care to have me teach. We had good times those days. I think we had just as good a time as they have today. We had candy pulls in the various homes.

Krakar: Describe a candy pull for us.

Horton: Well, Mother would cook the molasses and sugar together until it was ready to pull. If you keep pulling it enough, it gets white, and it's real good, too. And we had popcorn, too. One boy especially wanted to get his share of candy. The coats were hanging back of the stove. He kept coming back for more candy. We knew next day what he had done with the candy. Why, because he couldn't get his hands in the coat pockets and it was down to zero [laughter]. (The candy had melted in the pockets as it hung near the hot stove and had hardened in the cold winter air).

Morse: He hid the candy in the coat pocket.

Horton: That's right. The cold weather took care of the rest of it. There was a church built out there, the Chapman Church. It was built on the Dave Owen's farm. Dave Owens was a very religious person. He donated the use of the land, but he retained the deed. He also helped

with the work and the expense of building. But, if that was used for anything else but religious purposes it was to revert back to the farm. That church was built about 1880 and Reverend Chapman was the minister. He got whatever people wanted to give him. I know it was very cold and he went with horses. The congregation, it was a Congregational Church, donated enough to buy a fur coat for him which he did appreciate a great deal. His salary was not very high, but he continued as long as he lived. I never heard anything against that minister. There were two churches built. Another church, also a Congregational Church, was built about three miles from there. I don't understand why it was quite so close. The ones farther east went to the Chapman Church, which was built first. It was called the Second Church, because it was not ordained as early as the one across the creek which was called the First Church. The First Church burned down. So both churches are gone now.

Krakar: What happened to the Chapman Church?

Horton: They sold it and gave the proceeds to the Seward Mounds Cemetery Association. This was also called the Chapman Cemetery.

Krakar: What happened to the land around it?

Horton: I have the deed to it. It's on record in Yorkville. We bought the farm in 1930. Dave Owens had the deed drawn up in his name and then Jimmy Chapman, son of the minister, married Florence Owens, the oldest daughter of Dave Owens. They got the farm. A deed was drawn up for this one acre then. That's on record at Yorkville. And so is the deed when my sister and I bought it

and that deed also is in Yorkville.

Krakar: So, you own the land now?

Horton: Well, Ellis Jones told folks it belonged to the Church and he moved in there. We just didn't have any trouble over it. He is there.

Krakar: Do you remember any problems with fire? When you were young?

Horton: We didn't have many fires.. Not as many as they have today! They were always very careful, I think, about their stoves.

Morse: What about prairie fires?

Horton: Oh, prairie fires. No, I don't think there were any prairie fires. I never heard of them.

Krakar: Did you go sleigh riding?

Horton: Yes! Yes! We had parties in the winter time at the homes of the ones we went to school with. We had lap robes. Oh, I remember a buffer robe we had. Father and Mother brought that from Canada with them. It's the skin off of the buffalo, tanned- It's very warm.

We had straw on the bottom of a sled and we had buffer robes and blankets to keep us warm. We stirred around enough [laughter], enough to keep us warm. Sometimes the sled would upset, but then we knew how to make it right again.

Morse: What pulled the sled?

Horton: Horses. Oh! We never had tractors. It's since 1900 that they had tractors. The binders were hauled with horses. They had

three horses on the binder. I was driving it one day and the reel, that is that thing that goes around and brings the oats into the sickle, caught and when it broke it scared the horses. They thought there was a whip. They started to run. I would just about get them stopped when another would break. My brother came running and together we got them stopped.

Krakar: Did you have to do any farm work?

Horton: Yes, I worked on the farm. I drove the horses. I didn't do much manual labor, that is I did husking. I could husk a two box load of corn. When my father was with me to husk, we could have a big load.

Morse: What do you mean by a big load?

Horton: Three box load and put a side board on to build it up almost as high as the bang boards.

Krakar: Did you do a lot of canning and making of your own food?

Horton: I didn't do so much canning, but Mother did. She did a lot of canning. She had gooseberries, red currants, black currants, apples, cherries. We didn't have so many strawberries. They always raised their own potatoes and they had a big bin of them in the basement. We would eat them all before spring. We didn't have so many canned goods then. Canned goods were seldom seen in those days.

Krakar: So, you didn't do much work in the kitchen.

Horton: Well, yes. I did work in the kitchen. I learned to cook and

to bake; those days I think most of them knew how. That is, they were taught.

Krakar: What did you do in your free time when you were little?

Horton: Well, didn't have much free time. We would go out and pick up cobs to burn in the stove. Mother would throw ear corn out for the birds, chickens and turkeys to eat. We had a little red wagon and we would go out and pick up the cobs. We got tired of it but we picked them up. But we did have coal, but I don't remember where we got the coal, then. It wasn't as plentiful as it was later.

Krakar: Did your life revolve around your church?

Horton: We always went to Sunday School and Church. Yes, we always did, Father would take us in the buggy. We had the first Courtland buggy. It is an open buggy with foot high sides and seats that can be removed. It was the only one around that neighborhood and it was used as a hearse for the neighbors who passed away. It was pulled by a team of horses. I forgot to tell you that there was a bell bought. J. Fielding Martin bought the bell, and you could ring it or you could toll it. If there was a death in the neighborhood they were to let them know and that bell was tolled the number of times that the one who passed away was years old.

Krakar: Did you have parties and so forth at church?

Horton: We didn't have so many parties, but then we had suppers. We had lots of suppers and always had the big Christmas program; we thought it was big, anyway. I remember well one Christmas eve, we would have been disappointed if we hadn't got to go. But, Father hitched the

horses up and tied the lantern to the tongue of the buggy. We found our way up to the church. It rained all the way up there and all the way back, but we had parasols and enjoyed it. There was a good attendance there, even though it rained.

Morse: How long were church services in those days?

Horton: About an hour I think. Sometimes it seemed quite long because when we went to church we felt that when we were in church we' were to be quiet. Sometimes the mothers would take crackers to give the children. There was no one to take care of the children, when we went to church. We kept quiet.

Krakar: Did you wear special clothes to church?

Horton: We thought we had nice clothes. Mother made nice clothes for us. They had ruffles on them. We were always kept clean. She always kept them ironed. I sometimes wonder how she did as much as she did. But then, she didn't go to any card parties [laughter] and lots of other things that we use time for. There was not as much amusement then as there is now, but we kept busy and had something to think of.

Krakar: What kind of clothes did you wear to church?

Horton: Well, we had linen dresses. They were thin dresses. Light colored dresses. They had flowers in them. The skirts were full and they had ruffles on them. We had nice clothes then. Most of the mothers, I think, knew how to use the sewing machine. I always wore hats. They had pretty hats with brims and pretty flowers on them.

Krakar: Did you have a lot of boyfriends in those days?

Horton: No! No, they were not as plentiful as they are today [laughter].

Morse: How old were you when you got married?

Horton: I was thirty-seven. I stayed home and took care of all the rest. I took care of my parents. I was the last to get married.

Krakar: How did you meet your husband?

Horton: I think it was when I went to Plattville. He was in the meat market. I met him there. It wasn't long before he came over. I belonged to a club, the Sunshine Club, it was called. They were all ladies. We had a banquet. It was the twelfth day of December, 1917. The men come to that banquet. Then, I was married the fourteenth of March the next spring.

Morse: You had invited him to the banquet.

Horton: I invited him. We went to the banquet. We didn't go out so many times. We did go to some of the shows. He had a car, about the first that they had then. It was a model T Ford, I think, It was a Ford I know.

Morse: What kind of shows did you go to?

Horton: It was the Rialto. I think the Rialto was new then. Before that, when I was younger, there was a show on the west side, Crystal Stairs it was called (the theatre burned in 1910). When you walked up those stairs the water was running. They were glass steps. The water was running under them. Now, you would have to talk to someone in Joliet to find out more about that. That didn't last too long. We

would drive to Plainfield. There was a kind of car that went down to Joliet (Aurora and Joliet Electric Co.). You had to get home before twelve o'clock or you didn't have any way to get back.

Krakar: Your husband was in the meat business?

Horton: Yes, we had a meat market in Plattville, Horton's Meat Market. We had a very good business. We were only married nine years. He was the picture of health. He kept getting heavier. He weighed 230 pounds. He got appendicitis. In those days they didn't have the means of taking care of that as they do today. Peritonitis had set in; the appendix had burst. He was taken to the hospital and operated on. He only lasted a couple of days.

Morse: Where was this surgery done?

Horton: St. Charles Hospital. Yes, in Aurora. From Plattville, they would go to Aurora a good deal. But he had another accident that I think hastened his death, too. This was the twentieth of June, in the year 1920, Earl, our son, was only about a year and a half old then. We went to Glenn Park, that is over near Sheridan, west of Plattville. Will Holzier (employee of ^{Horton's} ~~Plattville~~ Meat Market) and his sister Mamie Gilligan went and their children. We were going to come home and Mamie says to Harry, that's my husband, "Are we going home without even getting our feet wet?" "Oh," he says, "I'm game if you are." So they put their bathing suits on. Will's wife was in Elgin State Mental Hospital, Mamie's husband had passed away. She had one child and he had three children. It was so hot there at the edge of the water so I took Earl farther back. Then I heard

this yelling. Dr. Conley said, "Do you suppose that they are in trouble?" I said that they must be, it can't be natural. He said that some said that they were only fooling. I went back. I could see Dr. Conley. They were way down, seems to me thirty feet down below. I was up on the bridge. Dr. Conley took hold of a limb and that limb would go down until he took the next limb. He got down. There were some fishermen on the water. They got him (Harry) into their boat and came over to the shore. Dr. Conley worked on him then. But Mamie Gilligan, she was the one that drowned him. She couldn't swim, but both Will and Harry were good swimmers. They say that a drowning person can drown the best swimmer there is. They had walked out and there was a ledge there and they dropped down. Just as I got back, I see Harry and he came up to about his waist in the water. He told me that he found that she was gone. He was freed. And he thought if he saved himself that was his only chance. He had used all the strength he had to bring himself up. And that's when he got unconscious. They got him into the boat. I left Earl over to Mrs. Barber's. I never had seen the woman before. He of course was tired and went to sleep. I stayed all night. They were working on Mamie. They got her out of the water. But, they couldn't save her. And I went through an inquest that night for Mamie. Then the next morning they had found Will's body. So I had to go through another inquest. I stayed a week taking care of him (Harry); a week before we could take him home. The sand had gotten in his lungs. You had to sweat him as much as you could and do anything to try and get that water out of his body. I guess everybody in Plattville were there. I was working over him and they went by just as though it was a funeral. The doctor was

there and I asked the doctor, "How long would it be before he could go home?" "Oh," he said, "don't think of it in that way. I'd rather you think that he wasn't going to get well." Nobody thought he would, but that never entered my mind. I said, "Doctor, he's got to." He did, but then he never was as well after that.

Krakar: Did you help him in the meat market?

Horton: Yes, I did. I could roll roasts, I could cut steak and if anybody put a quarter of a beef on the block, I could cut it. That is, I knew how to cut it just as good as he did. The saws were always sharp. In thrashing time, I would cut the meat and make the rolled roasts. I would deliver the beef. We had a very good business. He bought a lot of poultry. He would take tons of it up to Chicago.

Krakar: How did he deliver it?

Horton: The chickens would be in crates, piled on trucks, about 8 or 9 feet tall. In thrashing time, I would deliver meat to the housewives for the thrasher's dinners. But, there were two meat wagons. Will Holzier would take one and Harry would take one. They went around the neighborhood and sold meat. That is the way they would do it long years ago.

Morse: How did you keep it fresh?

Horton: Oh, with ice. There was a room and it was kept real cold, just with ice in there. We never had any meat spoil that I know of.

Krakar: How did you keep it on the trip to Chicago?

Horton: We didn't take it to Chicago. It was the live poultry that we took to Chicago. We butchered all our own. We had a slaughter house to butcher all our own beef. They came from Plainfield over there and bought a lot of beef. We sold steak for thirty-five cents a pound. And all meat was much cheaper than what it is now.

Morse: Was that all you sold was meat?

Horton: No. We had canned goods and oysters. Well, of course, that would be meat.

Morse: Any other fish-like products?

Horton: Well, no, we didn't handle fish. If you handle fish there is going to be smells. I think it would be hard to keep that from spoiling with the ice. Now, you see, they have refrigeration and can handle that better.

Krakar: Did you raise your own animals as well, and then butcher?

Horton: No. He bought the animals and brought them in. The animals that he bought were most all butchered. Some he took to Chicago, but not so many. The poultry would be loaded as high as this room is. The fall and up to the holiday time he hauled a lot of poultry up there.

Krakar: They would pay him to haul it?

Horton: No, he bought the poultry. He knew what he could get for it in Chicago and he sold it. And that man died and Harry and I went up

to Chicago to his funeral. So Harry and him both are gone. They traded together for a good while. (. . .)² I remember the World Fair in Chicago. [Worlds Columbian Exposition in 1893.]

Morse: Tell us about it. What did you enjoy most? How long did you stay?

Horton: We just went up for the day and came back. Father called early in the morning and said, "Anyone who wants to go to the World Fair better get up now." We got up. To me it was wonderful what I see! I can't describe it but there were so many pretty things. It was much as it looks today about things that they had at the Garden Club. We were there all day. We would drive to Joliet, you know, and go up on the train, then come back. We were pretty tired when we got home. My father was good about taking us to things.

Krakar: What do you remember most about the fair?

Horton: I believe one thing was the fish that I see, and the snakes above all. I hated snakes. I just can't tell you so much about what I see.

Morse: How old were you then?

Horton: About eleven or twelve years old. No, I was about ten years old. And a lot of things have happened since then. But, I think I have so much to be thankful for and that I have had the health that I have.

²Talk of Chicago fire which occurred before Mrs. Horton was born, 1871.

Morse: You were married in 1917. That was the beginning of World War I. What do you remember?

Horton: I tell you, the thing that I remember most was when the armistice was signed, November 11, 1918. Earl was a baby then. Everybody in Plattville left for Aurora. We went there. There were not many cars there and it wasn't long until it was filled in. If we wanted to get out, we just couldn't do that. But, Earl slept all the time. You see, he wasn't a bottle baby. I nursed him. So it was all right and he slept. Harry got out of the car. Everybody was so excited.

Krakar: So you had a celebration.

Horton: Not so much a celebration. I don't know what you'd call it because it just came. As soon as the third armistice was signed everybody rushed. I wonder what they would do now if the war was over.

Morse: They did it at the end of World War II. I remember the bells ringing. Do you?

Horton: Yes, but I don't think that there was as much excitement then as there was after World War I. Not to me anyway.

Krakar: How did the war affect your area: where you lived and the people you knew?

Horton: Well, there was one young man. He was loved by all. If you had a program, he could entertain you. Nice fellow. And he said,

"Well, I might as well go. I have no folks." He went and he was one of the first shot down.

Krakar: Did any others go from the area?

Horton: Yes. Yes, all the young folks of a certain age went. But, I don't remember as much about this as I did him. (. . .)³

Krakar: How did you communicate with people around you and farther away?

Horton: We had telephones.

Krakar: What about when you were a youngster, or say, around 1900 or a little later?

Horton: I never thought about that. When we went to school, if there was anything we needed about school, we found out about it.

Krakar: How did you get mail?

Horton: We got the mail right across from the schoolhouse. It was brought to Carpenter's. Then it was later brought to some other place. Lamb would bring it passed the schoolhouse. I don't know where he went to, but he was so mean to his horses. That's what I remembered.

Krakar: You had to go to that place then to pick up your mail?

Horton: Yes, it was just in the farmhouse. That's right near where I went to school, right north of there. Probably thirty yards, I guess it was.

³Talk of World War II rationing.

Krakar: Where did the mailman come from?

Horton: He lived north of where the schoolhouse is. I don't know how that mail was brought out there. But, then the mail was brought from Chicago to Plainfield to the Halfway House [503 Main St.] with a team of horses. Now, the Halfway House is here in Plainfield and it's half way between Chicago and Ottawa; about fifty miles to Chicago and about fifty miles to Ottawa. It was brought with horses and they had barns there. That house is still there and well kept. Levi Brockway's live in it. But, they^d bring the mail to Plainfield and leave that team there. Then go ahead to Ottawa with a fresh team. Then leave that team there, bring another team from Ottawa to Plainfield. They would leave that team and take the team that had rested and go back to Chicago.

Krakar: Then someone else came to Plainfield to take the mail around the area.

Horton: That's right. I suppose Lamb would come up to Plainfield and get the mail. I don't know. You see, we didn't think that far.

Krakar: Was Halfway House also an inn; restaurant or sleeping place?

Horton: Oh, no. Just a home. Mail was taken care of there. Mail that should go out was sent out. The coming in mail was taken care of. They had, I guess they were called dovecotes, to put the mail in, very much as they have it in the post offices now. There are several that get their mail in the post office down here now; some that are around town and they don't care to have it delivered. They go everyday and

get their mail.

Krakar: Sort of like pony express?

Horton: Yes. Yes, very much like pony express.

Krakar: Do you remember anything about an old settlers' picnic and did you ever go?

Horton: I don't know that they were called old settlers' picnics. But, then on the Fourth of July out there at House's Grove, that's right near where the First Congregational Church was, there was a place. The man who owned the land, I believe, gave that to be used as a picnic grounds. There was a spring there. Oh, the water was nice. The water wasn't any deeper down than that. You could just reach down and get a pail of water, get a cup of water, and drink it. It was real nice water. We always went to that picnic the Fourth of July. I remember well one, I guess that was the last picnic that we all got together, that is the relations. Uncle John Findlay's family were there. We were there. And we went home and that night Joe Findlay, my cousin, came up there and said that his father came home and he went to change his clothes and he had a stroke. He was real bad. So my father went right down there and the next day he drove clear over to Normantown and got Uncle Tom (Findlay) and took him down there. But, Uncle John was almost gone then. It happened that quick after the picnic.

Morse: What did you do on your picnic?

Horton: Oh, they had races: three-legged races, carrying eggs and they

found ways of amusing the children. The grown-ups did more visiting. They would be glad to visit because they didn't get together so much.

Krakar: Like a pot luck dinner?

Horton: That's right. If you had the time I could show you some pictures. I could show you the picture of Reverend and Mrs. King. She went over to England to see her son and was on the Titanic. When she was coming back the Titantic [sunk April 15, 1912] went down.

Morse: She was lost on the Titantic?

Horton: Yes. This picture was taken not long before she went. They were very nice people.

Krakar: What kind of foods did you eat on the picnic?

Horton: Oh, we had good food. Nice pies and fried chicken. Fried chicken was a treat then, but now that's about all you get [laughter].

Krakar: Everything homemade?

Horton: Everything homemade and it was good. We were hungry. We had exercised enough that we were glad to get something to eat.

Krakar: What else did you have, chicken. . .?

Horton: Pies and cakes. They were made real good, too. My mother used a lot of cream in doing her baking. We had real good baking. I wish I had some of it now. Mother always felt that we worked and took care of the cows and everything on the farm, that we could have as good as

anybody had. Mother was a good cook. She would make lots of black currant jam. She had a big jar. She would make that full. Some folks said that it tasted like bedbugs, but I never ate a bedbug [laughter]. My schoolmates surely enjoyed her cooking. I wished you could hear some of them. Oh, it isn't too long ago, Mary Moss was one of the schoolmates, she asked, "Do you make your pie crust out of cream like your mother did?" They remembered how well that pie crust tasted. It did taste different than what you have with lard.

Morse: How did you use cream in a pie crust? I'm interested.

Horton: You take sour cream and it's quite thick. You had milk in a pan and when it got sour, you don't get the kind of milk that we had, it was thick. She would make cottage cheese out of that and the cream was so thick, almost as thick as butter. You could just make the pie crust out of cream.

Krakar: What kind of food did you eat, like breakfast?

Horton: Oh, we had oatmeal a lot. Mother had fried cornmeal and cornmeal mush. She would make chicken and dumplings. (. . .)⁴

Krakar: Say, when you were young and on the farm, like on a summer day, what would you do? What time did you get up and did you do work?

Horton: Well, we always got up in the morning I know. We always had something to do.

⁴Making chicken and dumplings for the neighbors.

Krakar: Did you have to milk the cows and . . .?

Horton: I never milked a cow. My mother did. If I had started, I'd had to keep it up [laughter]. I could do all the barn chores. I could clean out the barn and I knew how to feed the horses. I knew how much corn to give them and how much oats to give them and all that. I could harness the horses, but I never milked a cow. We didn't have expensive toys like they have today. Broomsticks were mules and slats were horses. We would build a barn and have stalls. I remember so well one time Father came in from work. We had taken down some of the fence to make our barn better that way [laughter]. He wasn't cross to us. He just told us that we must not do that. He didn't want all the cows out. We had just as good a time as the children do today. I think it is wrong for children to have the toys that they have. I wish you could see what's in that garage over there. If it was light I would take you over and show it to you. The most expensive toys and they're not saving a dollar.

Morse: And the kids still play with the box the toy came with.

Horton: Yes, and they could have just as good a time. Well, I think as an example, if they are brought up to destroy and to have so much how are they ever going to save? We had one doll. I know we had one real nice doll. But, we took care of it. We thought that was the last.

Morse: You said "we." Did you share it with your sister?

Horton: She had a doll, too. If they got some for one they got some for another.

Morse: Do you still have your doll?

Horton: No. I don't know what happened to that. Agnes, my sister Agnes Belfield of Seward Township, got most of the things out of the house. Then my niece, Sarah Grate, took over. I don't know what happened to the thing.

Krakar: Did you get gifts at Christmas?

Horton: Oh, yes! Christmas was a great time. Santa Claus came. We had our stockings up and we always got something in them. We got toys. We always got some toys and books. We didn't get a lot, though. An orange was a treat. And a loaf of bakers bread was a treat. Now I wish we could get away from it [laughter].

Krakar: How did you decorate your homes for the holidays?

Horton: We didn't decorate. You couldn't get out and get decorations and such. I don't know whether they had them or not. You had to make something. Oh, I know what we decorated with. Now, we had the Christmas tree at the school. We popped corn and (we would) take it to school and string that popcorn. Sometimes we would string cranberries. That would hang in loops, you know. We didn't have the kind of decorations that they have today.

Krakar: What else did you put on the tree, then?

Horton: They had tinsel, not a great amount of it though. I don't remember that we had so much of that. As time went on we got more.

Morse: Did you hang cookies and candy on the tree?

Horton: Yes.

Morse: How were the cookies made?

Horton: Better than they are today [laughter], because they were made with the real stuff.

Morse: Did the children all take a hand in making the cookies and cutting them out?

Horton: No, I don't know as they did. Mother would do the baking, that is until we got old enough to do that. When we came home, my goodness, we were hungry. We always had something good to eat. When you walk three miles you're ready to have something. (. . .)⁵ The teacher's desk was on a rostrum at the back of the classroom. I remember once when my brother Willie and Jessie Wiley got into mischief, and to punish them she put Willie in a chair on her left and Jessie in a chair on her right. Jessie was on a chair that squeaked. We were watching Jessie. He would push back a little farther, and he would push back a little farther, until he got those back legs off that rostrum and tipped over. That's just what he wanted. Then everybody laughed. Florence Murray, the teacher, couldn't help but laugh, but she tried to scold him. She had no trouble with the children, though. And they all loved her. We would have parties and she was good to us. I think sometimes, if you're kind to people you get along better.

Morse: How long did she teach there?

Horton: Several years. She was only sixteen years old when she came to teach. She was a religious person and as honest as anybody could be. And yet, it wasn't too many years ago when she told that she was only sixteen years old when she started teaching. She had to put her age at eighteen

⁵Tape turned off.

or she couldn't teach. So, no matter how careful you are you sometimes do things that are not just right.

Morse: What did she do later in life, then?

Horton: That is all she ever did, was the missionary work because her health was gone. She rode on camels out there and oh, the hardship that woman went through.

Morse: Where was this?

Horton: Iran. It was Persia, and was later called Iran.

Morse: What did she do there? Did she teach?

Horton: She taught them the Bible and she was good at that. I guess she taught them how to do things, but they didn't have much to do with. And if she just told the hardships that she went through, you would wonder that people could; possibly, that didn't have it as cold as they did here. Missionaries have a hard life. She enjoyed it, though.

Krakar: Did you play a lot of tricks and pranks on your teacher?

Horton: I never did, but some of them did. I know once there was a snake put in the teachers desk. There were a few things like that done. They were alive years ago just like they are this year. But, they didn't do as mean tricks as they're doing now.

Morse: How about Halloween tricks?

Horton: Yes, they had lots of Halloween tricks. I know that they put and

tied a cow to Hampson's porch. Hampson's had a very nice home and a nice porch and they got that cow up on that porch. If they had to do it or were paid to, they wouldn't do it. But, they got the cow up there and tied it to the door knob. Things like that they did. And then in husking time, they usually were husking at Halloween, all night you would hear husking wagons going by. When folks got up in the morning and wanted to get busy and get their husking done, they would have to hunt all over for the wagons.

Morse: Did they play any tricks on the old outhouse?

Horton: Oh, yes. Yes. There is a man here in Plainfield, Mickey Hartong, and some boys were around playing tricks. You probably don't know what a privy is. But then, he happened to be in there when the boys came to tip it over. He started yelling [laughter]. (. . .)⁶ There is that ring. Would you like to see what's in it?

Morse: What do the dates mean in the ring?

Horton: The time that he dug the gold and the date the ring was made.

Morse: Oh, 1849 it was dug and in 1924 the ring was made.

Horton: That's right. Charles and Paul McKeown the attorneys, you know them? Well, their father was born right on the next farm to us, just a few rods to go over to their place. His father, Charles' and Paul's grandfather, he was the nicest old man, had an abscess on his leg and they had to take it off at the knee. My father had to be down there and help

⁶ Discussion of grandchildren.

them when they took his leg off. And then he had a wooden leg, not like the wooden leg he has now, it looked just like my leg does there now. Well, I wasn't sure about that when he came. Anyway he'd come up there with his wooden leg and he would tell us stories and talk with us. Mother had got a songbook. It was about that high, about that wide, about that thick through. It was green. I can see that before me yet. We would get that book so he would sing for us. And we would sing some comic song. We'd take that book and we never could find the song. It wasn't there at all. (. . .)⁷

Morse: You said music. Did you play any musical instrument?

Horton: Yes, Mother raised turkeys and chickens. She took the money and bought an organ. We took lessons. Mother was a very good singer and when the school children came, she would sing with us. She was the leader. We had a lot of music. But, after my brother died, brother Willie, that was in 1900, she never sang anymore. We never made any great showing with our music, but we had it for entertainment.

Krakar: Did you have pets?

Horton: Had cats, yes. We always had a dog. We had a dog that went mad. Rose Henry was our music teacher. She came four or five miles. She lived four or five miles south of us. She came there and was giving us a lesson and Mother noticed that the dog wasn't acting right and she was so afraid that something would happen. But, anyway, teacher was giving us lessons and she (Mother) got the dog in the granary and shut it in. By the next

⁷Calving on Earl's farm.

day it was frothing at the mouth. It was mad. But, before that, it had chased a cow and bit it and the cow went mad. Oh, it was terrible to see a cow mad. We had snakes and I hated them. They were just there. We would try to keep away from them. When we went to school though, we'd see great big spotted snakes. We would take stones and keep throwing at them; several of us children together until we killed them. And we were barefoot, too. My goodness, I'd hate to see children going barefoot around the snakes like we did. But, the bottoms of our feet got, I think, so tough that the snake couldn't bite them [laughter].

Krakar: I think we can kind of wrap it up now. Thank you very much. It's just been fascinating.

Morse: Yes, it's been fun.

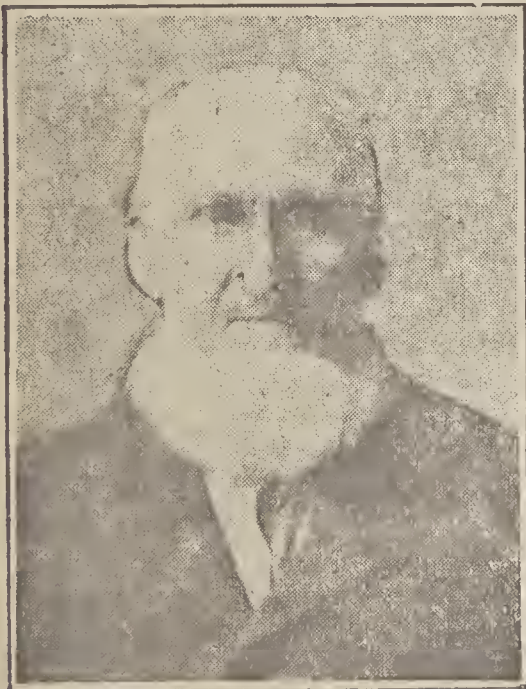
Krakar: We like to hear you talk.

Horton: Well, I have enjoyed you folks so much. It just seems that I've always known you.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1920

AN OLD SETTLER DIES

William Findlay passed away Tuesday morning, April 20, 1920, at his old home in the South part of Nau-say township in Kendall county. He was one of the old pioneers of that locality. Mr. Findlay was born nearly ninety years ago at Greenock, in Renfrewshire, Scotland. When he was two years of age his parents moved to near Landsdowne in Canada. At the time of the gold fever in California, Mr. Findlay was a young man living on a farm in Illinois, and the desire to try his luck at the great game, which was then stirring the whole nation, was too strong to permit him to remain at home. There was no railroad to the Golden West at that time, but young Findlay was of good stature and great strength



MR. WILLIAM FINDLAY

and health, and the trials and dangers of the trip were nothing to him. He paid a very considerable sum, (I think he told me about two hundred dollars) to a man who had organized a party, for the privilege of being taken to California. This privilege consisted only in receiving his meals and having the protection of being with a large number of travelers. All the men of the party were obliged to walk all the way and drive the cattle, which they took with them to sell in California. Also they had the privilege at night of being allowed to sleep under the several wagons of the train, and also the further privilege of chasing away the Indians so they would not steal the cattle.

This Western trip was in 1852, and Mr. Findlay returned to Canada by way of Panama and New York City

in 1854. He then farmed in Canada till May 1867, when he was married to Sarah McCromb in Jefferson county, New York, near their Canadian home. They then came to Kendall county, Illinois, by way of the Great Lakes, to Chicago, where they bought a new Shuttler wagon, to which they hitched the team they had brought with them on the boat, and drove down through Plainfield to Kendall county. During the first summer the wild stretches of open prairie of Illinois, looked rather forbidding to these new comers, and they thought of moving to Iowa. In the second year, they bought the farm, in the south edge of Nau-say township, on which they have lived ever since—nearly fifty-three years.

Mr. Findlay was one of the very few old settlers of that part whose span of life brought him down with us to these modern days. He has seen all the modern mechanical miracles perfected and brought into use. In 1852, he walked over thousands of miles across the immense and lonely reaches of the Overland Route on the Western Plains to California to dig gold, and this was on the very same route where now the Union Pacific fast trains haul one the same distance in four or five days, and one can eat and sleep and shave and read while the train is flying on its way.

Mr. Findlay was a man of very even and calm disposition, very quiet and peaceable, a man of a well-balanced mind, who easily gauged and weighed events and was never thrown off his balance nor excited by and of the ordinary affairs of life. If circumstances arose that loomed up big to most people he was never disturbed for he looked straight through and beyond them and he saw that, in the end, each event would shrink down to its true size, and pass on, leaving little mark behind it. So it was that William Findlay always seemed to be, the calmest and most philosophic person I ever knew. He had a splendid, even temper, and to have that he must have had a splendid, healthy body, and he did have such health. To me he seemed like a tower of strength, and while the rest of us were pushed here and there by the trifling events and the little changes that beset us every new day and filled us sometimes with furious and unjust anger, and again with fear and despair. All these he quietly observed and correctly measured and was unmoved by them. And so, too, his friendship was steady from year to year. A most intimate acquaintance with him from my childhood to now enables me to know that he never by his own act or word lost one friend.

I can recall that when I was a youngster and living on the next farm to the Findlays, and when some great storm would be coming, and when it was so terrible in its appearance that the children felt that the end of all things was close at hand, Mr. Findlay was so free from all excitement and was so unconcerned that it gave me new courage and confidence.

He was the last one living of a family of eleven children, all now laid to rest and separated by far distances. Some are buried in Canada, some in Iowa and some in Illinois.

Very few of the old time, close friends of Mr. Findlay are now here,

and those of us who remain offer our tribute of love and respect. May he rest in peace.

JAMES A. McKEOWN

The Funeral of Mr. Findlay

Funeral services were held from the home at 1 o'clock and at the Chapman church at 2 p. m., Thursday, April 29. Interment was in Seward cemetery. He leaves to mourn, his widow; three daughters—Mrs. Janet Grate of Nau-say, Mrs. Agnes Belfield of Seward, Mrs. Margaret Horton of Plattville; and four grandchildren.

Those from a distance who attended the funeral were James A. McKeown, East Moline; John A. McKeown and Joseph Foran, Chicago; Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Grate, Troy, New York; Mr. and Mrs. John Findlay, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Findlay and son, R. J., Walker Findlay, Blodgett; James Findlay, Wilmington; Mrs. Marion Brown, Normantown; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Findlay, Wheatland; Mrs. C. A. Miller, Will Findlay, Mr. and Mrs. James Toovey and daughter, Mabel, Joliet; Mrs. James Powers, Edward and Cecelia, Manhattan; Mr. and Mrs. L. K. Devereaux, Will Holzer and Mamie Gilligan, Plattville.

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Plainfield woman, 81, remembers old days

By JOHN WHITESIDE

Herald-News Writer

1890 PLAINFIELD — Born April 12, 1890, Mrs. Margaret Horton of Plainfield has seen life change from horse and buggies to a space craft landing on the moon.

She was born on a small farm about eight miles southwest of Plainfield, the seventh child of eight of immigrant parents from eastern Canada.

Her father, William Findlay, as a young man walked hundreds of miles to the California gold fields in 1852. He died in 1920 at the age of 90.

Some of Mrs. Horton's fondest memories are of her father's stories he told of the trip when she was a small girl. She still wears a ring that was made from a gold nugget he found in California.

She related the story as he had told it to her many years ago.

He joined a party that was going west, paid \$200, and walked all the way, driving cattle and oxen which were sold in California.

"He said that at night they would sleep under wagons but had to keep watch for Indians because they would steal anything," Mrs. Horton recalled.

Her father returned from California in 1854 and married Sarah McCromb. The family moved from Landsdowne, Canada to the Illinois farm shortly afterward.

Mrs. Horton recalls the days of her youth as "good days."

"People enjoyed life then and appreciated what they had, and everyone was a good neighbor," she said. "In those days we didn't have a lot of money to spend but we still had fun."

She said for entertainment the family would "sing around the organ or Mother might read the Bible to us." There were also candy pulls, raffles and square dances.

"I remember well one Christmas Eve when my father hitched the horses to the buggy and tied a lantern on the tongue so we could see the road while getting to a Christmas program," she said. "He also used to come and get us from school with the buggy when it rained — oh, that was such a treat — most of the time we walked the three miles to the one-room school."

Her father owned the first Courtland buggy in the area. She said it had two seats which could be removed and was used as a hearse by all the neighbors when someone died.

She also remembers her mother cooking on an old cookstove that used corncobs and wood for fuel.

"Mother was really a good cook," Mrs. Horton said with a sparkle in her eyes. "School-mates staying all night with me used to say my mother's black and red currants were the best."

She said her mother always had a big garden in the summer and canned a variety of vegetables, gooseberries, currants and other things.

She said her father and brothers used to dig pits and put apples and potatoes in them, and cover them with straw and dirt for storage.

"Oh my, they tasted good in the wintertime," Mrs. Horton recalled, explaining that the apples could be preserved all winter long in such a manner.

Her mother raised turkeys and ducks and managed to make enough money doing so to purchase an organ. Mrs. Horton and her sister, Agnes, learned to play that organ.

Three of her brothers and sisters died while infants from diseases of the time. All are dead now except Mrs. Horton.

In 1917 she married Benjamin Harrison "Harry" Horton after a courtship in one of the first Model T cars. They went for a honeymoon to Preston, Ind.

Her husband opened a meat market in Plattville but he died in 1926 at the age of 44. She said he had an appendicitis attack and his appendix burst.

At that time she moved to Plainfield, built a home and raised her son Earl, a farmer now in Minooka. She has two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She worked as a practical nurse over the years.

Asked about changes over the years, Mrs. Horton said the three things most remarkable in her lifetime were the automobile, telephone and television.

"No one thought cars would be a success when they first came out," she said. "And going to the wall and talking to someone over a wire or seeing pictures in the house from all over the world, these are some of the most wonderful things."

"People have changed, also. One thing — you can't trust them now ... I don't want to go outside after dark. In the old days everyone was a

friend; when you needed help neighbors were there, not for money but for friendship. I just can't understand some of the people now."

Mrs. Horton now lives alone at 708 Commercial St. with her dog, Lulabelle. She spends her time cooking, doing housework, reading, playing cards with friends, and her activities include a garden club and church fellowship.

She drove her car until last year. And she shoveled the snow out of her driveway this year.

To what does Mrs. Horton owe her long life?

"I've worked hard ever since I've been able," she said. "But I never worried much."

"For instance, if I lost a little money, it was gone and there was nothing I could do about it. You have to accept life for what it is, it's the only way to live. If anything happens you have to accept. And always do what you can for people while living. Just don't worry."

*Note
A retraction
by the Herald
News recorded
the correct age
as 91 and her
correct date of
birth as 1880.
A picture was
printed also
as Krakau*

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